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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**WHERE ARE THE INFANTRY SERGEANTS?**  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE MARINE CORPS'  
POLICIES AND PROCESSES THAT ADVERSELY  
AFFECTED THE AVAILABILITY OF INFANTRY  
SERGEANTS TO SERVE AS SQUAD LEADERS IN  
THE OPERATING FORCES.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Where are the Infantry Sergeants? An examination of the Marine Corps' policies and processes that adversely affected the availability of infantry Sergeants to serve as squad leaders in the operating forces

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**Thesis:** The United States Marine Corps' enlisted assignments policies, enlisted retention policies, promotion timing, and manpower requirements have adversely affected the availability of infantry Sergeants to serve as squad leaders in the operating forces.

**Discussion:** It is likely the nature of the Sergeant deficiency in the operating forces began because there was never any pressure at Headquarters Marine Corps to ensure deploying battalions received their requisite number of non-commissioned officers. Certainly, the latest version of the Marine Corps Precedence Levels for Manning and Staffing, MCO 5320.12F published in September 2008, indicates some pressure remains at Headquarters Marine Corps to assign non-commissioned officers to special duty assignments, particularly Marine Corps Recruiting Command. For enlisted Marines, promotion to Corporal and Sergeant are vacancy-driven within the military occupational specialty. For infantry Marines, on average promotion timing to Sergeant occurs after four years of service. Reenlistments also occur in the fourth year of service and provide an infantry Marine who has made multiple combat deployments an opportunity for a break from the operating force tempo. Reenlistment decisions, promotion timing, and the prioritization of units for manning and staffing contribute significantly to the deficiency of Sergeants available for assignment to deploying infantry battalions.

The "three block war strategic corporal" envisioned by former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles Krulak is closer to a reality due to the training and manpower initiatives that grew out of "A Concept for Distributed Operations." The Marine Corps is adapting its manpower practices to meet the operating forces requirements. Problems with Headquarters Marine Corps manpower practices can be resolved quickly, but the available inventory of Marines to reassign may take several years to materialize. Two recommended modifications to existing manpower practices are: to reduce special duty assignment tour length to 24 months and implement a "year out" program for squad leaders that provides professional military education and infantry specific career progression training.

**Conclusion:** Headquarters Marine Corps has implemented retention programs that will strengthen the infantry leadership core by retaining combat experienced Marines to serve as squad leaders. Further adjustments to assignments and retention policies will ensure that Sergeants are available and assigned to lead infantry squads.

## *Table of Contents*

	Page
DISCLAIMER.....	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	ii
PREFACE.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Why Should Squad Leaders be Sergeants.....	3
Where Are the Sergeants?.....	8
Assignments That Require Infantry Sergeants.....	9
CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PROBLEM.....	
Promotion Timing.....	12
“Deploy-ability”.....	14
Provisional Tables of Organization.....	15
Perception or Reality.....	16
Course Corrections.....	18
TWO PROPOSED REMEDIES.....	19
CONCLUSION.....	20
ENDNOTES.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	23
APPENDIX A.....	25
APPENDIX B.....	26
APPENDIX C.....	27
APPENDIX D.....	28
APPENDIX E.....	29
APPENDIX F.....	31
APPENDIX G.....	32

## *Table of Contents*

	Page
DISCLAIMER.....	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	ii
PREFACE.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Why Should Squad Leaders be Sergeants.....	3
Where Are the Sergeants?.....	8
Assignments That Require Infantry Sergeants.....	9
CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PROBLEM.....	
Promotion Timing.....	12
“Deploy-ability”.....	14
Provisional Tables of Organization.....	15
Perception or Reality.....	16
Course Corrections.....	18
TWO PROPOSED REMEDIES.....	19
CONCLUSION.....	20
ENDNOTES.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	23
APPENDIX A: Definition of Terms.....	25
APPENDIX B: Acronyms.....	26
APPENDIX C: Rifle Company Tables of Organization.....	27
APPENDIX D: 0311 Enlisted Personnel Availability Digest.....	28
APPENDIX E: 0311 Actual B-Billets.....	29
APPENDIX F: Promotion Timing for 0311 Corporals and Sergeants.....	31
APPENDIX G: Typical 0311 Career Path.....	32

## Introduction

As it has throughout numerous transitional periods in American history, the Marine Corps sought to define its role in the post Cold War period. In the mid-1990s, then-Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles Krulak tried to shift the Corps' focus toward future enemies rather than technological advancements. General Krulak emphasized that chaos and irregular warfare would characterize future conflicts. He prophetically articulated the need to reframe military thinking away from linear formations and conventional conflict.<sup>1</sup> General Krulak described the future operating environment as one requiring competent and professional small unit leaders. As he said in January 1999,

The inescapable lesson of Somalia and of other recent operations, whether humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping, or traditional warfighting, is that their outcome may hinge on decisions made by small unit leaders, and by actions taken at the lowest level. The Corps is, by design, a relatively young force. Success or failure will rest, increasingly, with the rifleman and with his ability to make the right decision at the right time at the point of contact.<sup>2</sup>

Combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated the importance of information warfare on the modern battlefield. When every decision and action has the potential to be broadcast worldwide nearly instantaneously by the media, friendly forces, and United States' adversaries, the need for competent, knowledgeable and professional small unit leaders becomes amplified. Similar to "The Strategic Corporal", "A Concept for Distributed Operations" (2005) describes an operating environment where small and highly capable units play a critical role in shaping and fighting the battle. Enabled with improved communications equipment, these distributed operations units will provide the spatial advantage commonly sought in maneuver warfare as described in the Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication One, *Warfighting*.<sup>3</sup> Distributed operations units will be able to use close combat or supporting arms, including joint fires, to disrupt the enemy's access to key terrain and avenues of approach.

Distributed operations continue the trend toward decentralization of authority and decision making. Distributed operations envision junior leaders dramatically increasing the speed of command, shattering the enemy's cohesion and rapidly adapting to the spectrum of complex operational problems.<sup>4</sup>

"A Concept for Distributed Operations" sparked significant debate within the Marine Corps. Regardless of the tactical echelon that will practice distributed operations, in order to execute them, small unit leaders have not adequately trained to operate independently on the battlefield.<sup>5</sup> Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated that small units have been effective in traditional kinetic operations. As Operation Iraqi Freedom continued, and Marine units became further dispersed across Iraq, the Marine Corps made significant adjustments to its pre-deployment training programs in order to better prepare units for the challenges in Iraq. The list of tasks infantry units trained to grew as the Marine Corps emphasized proficiency in combined arms, fire and maneuver, and civil-military operations associated with counterinsurgency. Marine leaders repeatedly emphasized the vital role of the infantry squad leader in counterinsurgency operations, and they recognized that the counterinsurgency effort would not succeed without competent and mature squad leaders.<sup>6</sup>

After-action reports from units returning from Iraq and Afghanistan repeatedly described the challenges of the counterinsurgency fight and the need for mature and sophisticated non-commissioned officers leading squads.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after assuming Command of First Marine Expeditionary Force in August of 2006, then Lieutenant General James N. Mattis stated, "We now have the same expectation of our noncommissioned officers as we do of our field-grade officers -- that they will be able to read the cultural terrain. It is more important now in a time



when you don't seize terrain and when the army against you doesn't come at you in mass formation."<sup>8</sup>

The tables of organization for Marine Infantry battalions have 729 billets for rifle squad leaders with primary MOS 0311 and the paygrade of Sergeant (E5). In 2006, the Center for Naval Analysis determined that, on average, deploying infantry battalions were deficient by 12 0311 Sergeant Squad Leaders. In other words, in the average deploying battalion, 15 rifle squads were lead by Sergeants, while the remaining 12 rifle squads were lead by Corporals or Lance Corporals.<sup>9</sup> As "A Concept for Distributed Operations" began raising expectations for the enhanced demand on squad leaders, at the semi-annual meetings of the Marine Infantry Operational Advisory Group, the Marine Corps' regimental commanders began questioning why infantry Sergeants seemed so rarely available to deploy with infantry battalions; they then began pressuring Headquarters Marine Corps to develop a solution.<sup>10</sup>

### **Why Should Squad Leaders Be Sergeants?**

In order to examine the manpower issues associated with infantry Sergeants, it is logical to begin with an examination of how and why the rank of Sergeant became critical to the organization of the Marine Rifle Company.

Sergeants were not always squad leaders in infantry units. As late as 1914, United States Army and Marine Corps infantry companies would organize for battle just as they would for parade by lining up all its privates and corporals in two ranks according to height. Corporals were squad leaders and squads were eight man units. If a company had suffered significant casualties, it would reorganize itself by dissolving enough squads to fill the remainder to six or eight men apiece. Platoons formed after organizing the squads. Each platoon would get two to four squads, a "guide," and a platoon leader. The company would form not less than two or more

than four platoons; therefore, its maximum strength was 16 squads (four platoons of four squads each). Squads were numbered from the right, one through 16. If the company were short a lieutenant, a Sergeant would lead a platoon. Sergeants also served as platoon guides, who functioned in much the same way as Platoon Sergeants do now. If there were extra Sergeants, some platoons would have a second guide. In combat, the platoons and their squads would stay close enough to the company commander to receive voice commands or visual signals. It is important to note that prior to 1921, there were no tables of organization for billets below the company level.<sup>11</sup>

Further change to the organization of United States Army infantry units resulted from a fact-finding board made up of representatives from the cavalry, infantry, field artillery, quartermaster corps, and general staff. Colonel Chauncey Baker, a quartermaster, chaired this board. The Baker Board sailed for Europe in late May of 1917 and spent six weeks touring France and England to collect as much information as possible on the optimal combat organization for what would become the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The AEF's commander, General John J. Pershing, decided to retain the 250-man rifle companies recommended by the Baker Board although he reduced the size of their headquarters in order to put more men in the rifle platoons. The AEF rifle company of six officers and 250 soldiers would be larger than either a British rifle company of six officers and 221 men, or a French company of four officers and 194 men, although it would have a similar structure based on four rifle platoons.\* The AEF Company's extra manpower would better enable it to absorb heavy casualties and then rebuild itself afterwards. Lieutenants led the first three rifle platoons but the company's most senior Sergeant usually led the fourth platoon. Tactically, a rifle platoon broke down into two half platoons led by Sergeants. Lacking their own tables or organization, Marine

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\* Appendix C graphically depicts the Table of Organization of the AEF Rifle Company

Corps rifle companies mirrored their Army counterparts. The Marine Corps' inclusion in the AEF was not welcome by General Pershing and thus the Marine Corps' Fourth (and Fifth) Brigades had little choice but adopt the Army's tables of organization and equipment.<sup>12</sup>

The AEF rifle platoon's internal organization was intended more to facilitate training than for tactical use. For battle, the lieutenant was expected to task organize his platoon into as many as seven squads of six-to-eight men each and then to group these squads into two half platoons. Though the exact composition and distribution of the squads in an AEF platoon was left up to the platoon leader, it was normal to base the two half-platoons on the rifle and automatic rifle sections. Sergeant section leaders would become the half-platoon leaders and they would cross-attach squads among themselves so that each would have a rifle squad and an automatic rifle squad. The remaining three squads in the platoon would each get a four-man team from the hand bomber section plus three rifle grenadiers. For an eighth man, each of these squads could use one of the messengers from platoon headquarters. Though most squads were to have eight men each, the two automatic rifle squads would only have their original seven. Initial planning anticipated that only one team per automatic rifle squad would actually carry its automatic rifle except in broken terrain where the half-platoon might separate into two or more parts. The other team would carry rifles only.

While experienced officers might have been able to handle these rather complex "build it yourself" platoons, they must have been utterly bewildering to the barely trained temporary second lieutenants that commanded most of them. With experience, a number of basic principles evolved to guide officers in how to organize their units in the face of manpower shortages. First, the automatic rifle squads, being the heart of the platoon's firepower, were always maintained at full strength. Second, since the "hand bombers" seldom achieved any special expertise with the

hand grenade, they could serve as extra riflemen to fill gaps in other sections. Third, the rifle grenadier section could reorganize as two teams of three grenadiers and one carrier each. Adding four riflemen to each team would produce two squads. Any remaining riflemen could then form additional squads. Each half platoon could then have an automatic rifle squad, a rifle and rifle grenadier squad, and a rifle squad.<sup>13</sup>

The next changes to the infantry battalion tables of organization occurred in 1921 when uniformly organized sections and squads supplanted the old AEF "do-it-yourself" squads cobbled together from dissimilar rifle, automatic rifle, hand bomber, and rifle grenadier sections. The resulting simplification of the rifle platoon's structure made it much easier to command. The result was new multi-purpose rifle squad, composed of a corporal and seven privates, equipped with its own Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and its own rifle grenadier (with a grenade launcher attached to his rifle). The senior private in the squad was trained to take over if the corporal became a casualty. For ammunition, the squad was supposed to carry 100 rounds per rifle and 480 for the BAR but it would normally receive additional ammunition just prior to entering combat. Three rifle squads, led by a sergeant and assisted by a corporal (serving as "guide") made up a rifle section. Two sections plus a platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, and four runners comprised a rifle platoon.<sup>14</sup>

Sergeants were not rifle squad leaders in U.S. Army or Marine Corps tables of organization until April 1942. At that time, the rifle squad was composed of one Sergeant squad leader, one Corporal assistant squad leader, one Browning Automatic Rifleman, and 9 privates. In February 1944, the Army modified its rifle company table of organization because of anxiety over the often-mediocre performance its rifle squad leaders.<sup>15</sup> The Army believed that Staff Sergeants that were more senior should serve as rifle squad leaders rather than Sergeants.

three fire teams. Each fire team would have a corporal fire team leader armed with an M1 rifle, a BAR man, an assistant BAR man with a carbine, and a rifleman with a rifle. The rifles could be fitted with M7 rifle grenade launchers as required and M-8 grenade launchers could be fitted to the carbines.<sup>17</sup> The rifle squad consisted of thirteen Marines: a Sergeant squad leader and three fire teams of four Marines. Each rifle platoon had forty-six Marines; three rifle squads, a Platoon Commander, a Platoon Sergeant, a Platoon Guide, a demolitions specialist, and three messengers.<sup>†</sup>

### **Where are the Sergeants?**

With the exception of weapon systems and communications systems changes, the rifle squad of today is identical to the organization recommended by Lieutenant Colonel Griffith in 1944. According to current tables of organization for a Marine infantry battalion, Marine Sergeants should serve in squad leader billets.<sup>18</sup> However, the United States Marine Corps' efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have highlighted a significant deficit in the number of infantry Sergeants assigned to infantry battalions.<sup>19</sup> An examination of the nature of this problem requires an analysis of the manpower requirements for infantry Sergeants. The Marine infantry battalion table of organization provides a consistent target for the Marine Corps manpower inventory planners. Additionally, it is imperative to examine the manpower requirements for infantry Sergeants outside infantry battalions. Other assignments within the Marine Corps' table of organization have adversely affected the availability of infantry Sergeants to act as squad leaders. The current inventory of Marine Riflemen (MOS 0311) and their current assignment distribution is represented in Appendices A and B. Promotion timing for infantrymen affects the availability of infantry Sergeants. Finally, the timing of the reenlistment decision also has an affect on the availability of infantry Sergeants.

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<sup>†</sup> Appendix C graphically depicts the Table of Organization of the US Marine Corps Rifle Company of 1944

### **Assignments That Require Infantry Sergeants**

Aside from the billets in infantry battalions for infantry Sergeants, there are billets in all of the special duty assignments that require infantry Sergeants. The special duty assignments are Recruiter, Drill Instructor, Marine Combat Instructor, Marine Embassy Security Guard, and Marine Corps Security Forces. With few exceptions, Marines have their initial opportunity to pursue special duty assignments when they are considering their first reenlistment. The problem this creates is that, without exception, each special duty assignment requires a three year commitment by the Marine when assigned as a Recruiter, Drill Instructor, Embassy Security Guard, Combat Instructor, or Security Forces Marine. The infantry Marines who request and are approved for special duty assignments will thus not return to the infantry for at least three years.<sup>20</sup> Infantry Marines approved for duty with Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) are also unlikely to return to the infantry for at least three years.

There are advantages to the individual Marine who chooses a special duty assignment. Because such assignments require a Marine to succeed in a challenging environment outside his primary occupational specialty, promotion boards give special consideration to those Marines who successfully complete such tours. Special duty assignment tours also have increased opportunity for meritorious promotions. The potential for a meritorious promotion is a powerfully attractive incentive and, as a result, another complication arises: manpower shortages. The special duty assignments require by Marine Corps order that the tour is for three years for the Marine to receive the appropriate credit for it. Coupled with promotion timing for infantrymen from Sergeant to Staff Sergeant, the special duty assignments have the net affect of returning more Staff Sergeants than Sergeants to the operating forces. For example, an infantry

Corporal reenlists for four years and is approved for recruiting duty at the conclusion of his initial contract. After completing Basic Recruiters Course, he receives one hundred points towards his composite score and shortly thereafter, he is promoted to Sergeant. Three years later he checks out of his recruiting station and reports to an infantry battalion. With three years time in grade and a successfully completed special duty assignment, he is likely to be selected and promoted to Staff Sergeant within a few months.

Additional challenges in this regard are those assignments outside the infantry battalions that do not classify as special duty assignments (i.e. non-special duty assignments). The largest "population centers" for these Marines are at the Weapons and Field Training Battalions at Camp Pendleton, California and Parris Island, South Carolina, Weapons Training Battalion and The Basic School, Quantico, Virginia. These assignments are desirable to many infantrymen because they recognize that they have three advantages: a break from the deployment cycle, regular work hours, and greater potential to pursue off-duty education. Unfortunately, military occupational specialty of the Marines who choose the "non-special duty" assignments find that they are not provided much opportunity to exercise their leadership skills since they are serving with many peer non-commissioned officers and very few junior Marines. These Marines also reenlist with the expectation that their assignment will be a three-year break from the Fleet Marine Force. When their three-year break is concluding, the infantry assignment monitors will issue orders back to the operating forces.

When large numbers of non-commissioned officers assigned to non-deployable billets at the Weapons Training Battalions and the Basic School refuse to extend or reenlist to return to the operating forces, it leaves fewer non-deployable assignment options for the first term Marines in the operating forces looking for a break from the deployment tempo. By the Marine Corps Order

P1300.8R, the Marine must reenlist or extend to execute orders so that he will have a minimum of twenty-four months time on station when he arrives at his next duty station.<sup>21</sup> By the time the option is presented to the Marine – reenlist or extend for orders back to the operating forces – many have become disenchanted with their current assignment. They are tired of wearing the rank of a non-commissioned officer and not having the opportunity to lead Marines. Many have begun college and do not want to return to the operating forces because they recognize that the training and deployment tempo will minimize the opportunity for off-duty education. Whatever the reason, many non-commissioned officers do not execute orders back to the operating forces from “non-special duty” assignments. Once a Marine refuses to execute orders, he is prevented from reenlisting and must separate from the Marine Corps.<sup>22</sup> This also creates assignment and retention challenges for the infantry assignments monitors.

Another aspect of the assignment process that adversely affects the availability of infantry Sergeants is the size of the infantry. The infantry occupational specialties account for approximately 32,354 Marines and are the largest occupational specialties in the Marine Corps.<sup>23</sup> Although the planning conducted at Headquarters Marine Corps considers a “fair-share” distribution for special duty assignments and non-occupationally specific assignments, many occupational specialties do not adhere to the quotas they are assigned. Occupational specialties that have significant entry-level training and considered “high demand, low density” rarely fulfill their quotas for billets outside the operating forces. Because these specialties are in demand outside the Marine Corps, retention of Marines with these skills is difficult.

Marines in all occupational specialties are always looking to try something different. Thus, when enlisted assignment monitors and commanders refuse to allow Marines the opportunity to broaden their experience through a special duty assignment; this is unlikely to



positively enhance retention efforts. Special duty assignments are one of Headquarters Marine Corps' highest staffing priorities since Recruiters, Drill Instructors, and Combat Instructors all contribute to making Marines. The lack of support for special duty assignments by one or several occupational specialties requires other occupational specialties to cover the shortfall. Further exacerbating the shortage of Sergeants in the operating forces, many times infantry Marine cover the B-billet<sup>‡</sup> shortfalls of other MOSs. Appendices D and E show that as of 9 January 2009, 0311 Sergeants and Corporals are assigned to B-billets at a number exceeding the B-billet plan for the MOS.

### **Promotion Timing**

For enlisted Marines, promotion to Corporal and Sergeant are vacancy-driven within the military occupational specialty. In this process, a minimum composite score is a key part of the entire process. Appendix F shows the distribution in the time to Corporal and to Sergeant for the 0311s promoted in the October 2003 to June 2005 period. About half of 0311 promotions to corporal occur by 2.8 years of service. There is some variation, however, as 10 percent of them were promoted by two years of service and 10 percent took 3.6 or more years to promote to Corporal. On average, 0311 promotion time to Sergeant was 4.3 years. However, 10 percent of the 0311 Sergeants were promoted by 3.2 years of service and 10 percent were promoted at 6 or more years of service. The point in time at which half of the promotions occurred is called the median time to promotion. The average promotion time was 4.3 years for these 0311 Sergeants, but the median promotion time (the time at which half of the promotions had occurred) was 3.9 years.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>‡</sup> Assignments not directly related to a Marine's primary occupational specialty. Examples are Drill Instructor, Recruiter, and Marksmanship Instructor.

The mean promotion timing for Infantry Marines to the grade of Sergeant occurs around four and a half years of service. This means that the average infantry Marine does not get promoted to the rank of Sergeant until he has completed one four year enlistment contract. The implications of this are significant. First, since the promotion to Sergeant, on average, occurs after the four years of service mark, the Marine Corps has to retain (reenlist) the Marine in order to have an infantry Sergeant. Second, the first term Marine who reenlists is entitled to a choice of duty station. This first reenlistment is the only time that a Marine has the power to positively influence where he will be assigned. After the first enlistment, Marines are considered "careerists" and are assigned wherever the needs of the Marine Corps dictate. With the prospect of continued deployments, very few infantry Marines reenlist to remain in the deploying infantry battalions. Those Marines who do reenlist overwhelmingly choose an assignment that takes them away from the deployment tempo of the Marine Corps' infantry.<sup>25</sup>

Appendix G represents the typical career path of an enlisted infantry Marine. The large size pipe that begins at year of service one and goes to year of service four indicates the size of the first term population of infantrymen. At the fourth year of service, the pipe narrows indicating the requirements for retention of a small percentage of the first term force. Also at that point, there are pipes flowing Marines away from the operating forces and into special duty assignments and non-special duty assignments, only to return at the seventh year of service. Because of their relative seniority, the Marines who return to the operating forces at the seventh year of service may never serve as squad leaders. Small pipes indicate the relatively small number of Marines who choose to extend vice reenlisting and the small number of Marines who reenlist to remain in the operating forces. Ongoing initiatives to retain infantry small unit leaders have the potential to keep first term non-commissioned officers in the operating forces longer

through targeted extensions and incentive programs that increase reenlistment bonuses for Sergeants willing to continue service in the operating forces. An important consideration in this diagram is when the Marine is available to return to the operating forces. If he returns during year of service eight, he is already in the promotion zone for Staff Sergeant and before long the Marine will be filling a billet appropriate for a Staff Sergeant. The average promotion to Staff Sergeant occurs at approximately eight and a half years of service. The other critical point that this diagram demonstrates is represented by the pipeline that runs straight downward. This shows the number of first term Marines who separate from active duty service after their initial contract expires. The Marines hope to retain between 25 and 30 percent of its first term infantry population.<sup>26</sup>

### **“Deploy-ability”**

On January 9, 2009, the Enlisted Personnel Availability Digest (EPAD) showed the total inventory of assignable 0311 Sergeants as 2395. EPAD showed 386 Sergeants are currently serving as Drill Instructors, Recruiters, Combat Instructors, Embassy Security Guards, or with Marine Security Force Battalion. The tables of organization for Marine infantry battalions and Marine light armored reconnaissance battalions show a requirement for 1,143 0311 Sergeants. On the surface, it appears that the requirement in the operating forces for 0311 Sergeants is easily coverable by the overall Marine Corps inventory of Sergeants (operating forces require 1143, overall 0311 inventory is 2395). The overall inventory of 0311 Sergeants accounts for those Marines who do not have sufficient time on contract to deploy.<sup>27</sup> When Headquarters Marine Corps staffs infantry battalions for deployment, it only considers “deployable” those who have an end of active service (EAS) date 90 days after the planned unit return from deployment date. Marines who do not have a full 90 days beyond the estimated unit return date are

considered short term deployable, meaning the unit can deploy the Marines but must ensure the Marines have ample time to return from deployment to complete their separation processing. The inefficiency this system creates is not readily apparent and requires explanation. The Commandant of the Marine Corps requires Headquarters Marine Corps to staff 95 percent of the table of organization for infantry battalions with deployable Marines. If a battalion has its table of organization complement of Sergeants but one third are only "short term deployable," Headquarters Marine Corps will attempt to transfer the shortfall of "deployable" Sergeants. This will occur even though the short term deployable Marines have enough time remaining on their enlistment contracts to complete the deployment.<sup>28</sup>

The notion of "deployability" did not affect enlisted staffing in recent conflicts. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm was too brief to have had significant impact on manpower inventories. Unit staffing was approached completely differently during the Vietnam War, when units did not train together prior to deployment, in that context, individual Marines deployed for one-year tours as individual replacements and the consequence was no unit cohesion. Hence, presumably, in the 1960's and early 1970's this was easier to manage the assignment of Sergeants to the infantry battalions. The priority units were those already deployed to Vietnam. World War II was also a different model because enlistment contracts were for the war's duration. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan involve the periodic deployment of all 27 of the Marine Corps' infantry battalions.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Headquarters Marine Corps is challenged to capitalize remaining enlistment contract time, mindful of the necessity for unit cohesion, while equitably distributing deployable Sergeant squad leaders to staff each deploying battalion.

### **Provisional Tables of Organization**

Provisional tables of organization are created to fulfill manpower requirements for a specific operation or exercise. For example, Marine Forces Central Command created provisional tables of organization for Regimental Combat Teams deploying for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Total Force Structure division at Headquarters Marine Corps does not manage them and therefore provisional table of organizations do not affect the manner by which Headquarters Marine Corps determines recruiting, training, or retention requirements. Lessons learned from both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom resulted in increased manpower requirements for Regimental Combat Team Headquarters in order to support sustained around the clock operations.

The Regimental Combat Team headquarters has also grown a requirement for a personal security detachment for the Regimental Combat Team commander. The personal security detail is approximately the size of an infantry rifle platoon and often contains two or three times the number of Sergeants rated by the standard infantry platoon table of organization. Many of the Sergeants are pulled by division and regimental headquarters directly from deploying infantry battalions where they would likely serve as squad leaders. Provisional table of organizations create significant problems for manpower management at Headquarters Marine Corps because locally determined manpower requirements misalign the limited population of infantry Sergeants. The challenge for Headquarters Marine Corps is further exacerbated when Marines remain on a deploying battalion's roles after they have been sent to higher headquarters to serve on a personal security detachment.

### **Perception or Reality?**

Since the beginning of the "Long War" there has been significant interest within the Marine Corps to correct the perceived deficiency of Sergeants in the infantry. So how did this

seemingly simple problem develop in the first place? Marine Corps Order 5320.12F, Precedence Levels for Manning and Staffing, delineates which units in the Marine Corps will be “excepted” meaning staffed to 100 percent of the Table of Organization, which units will be “priority” meaning staffed to 95 percent of the Table of Organization, and which units will receive “proportionate share” meaning staffed with a proportionate share of the remaining assignable Marines. Marine Corps Order 5320.12F was signed 12 September 2008 and the units listed as “excepted” were:

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (District and Below)

Marine Security Guard Battalion

HMX-1 (Executive Support and Other Support)

Active Duty in Support of Reserves (Regiments/Groups and below)

MEU Command Elements

Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL)

4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Antiterrorism) Command Element

Infantry battalions are listed among the “excepted” commands. However, the infantry battalions are now listed as commands to be staffed at 100 percent of their table of organization only in fiscal year 2011.

Previous versions of the Precedence Levels for Manning and Staffing listed infantry battalions as “priority units.” This decision had significant impact on how Headquarters Marine Corps developed staffing plans. Marine Corps Recruiting Command is listed first among the units designated as “excepted”. For the Marines responsible for developing staffing plans, the message was clear: Marine Corps Recruiting Command is the Commandant’s highest priority; thus, assigning Marines to recruiting duty takes precedence over assigning Marines to the

operating forces. The consequences of prioritizing Marine Corps Recruiting Command are difficult to measure. It would be naïve to suggest that this prioritization does not affect the availability of infantry Sergeants for deploying infantry battalions.

### Course Corrections

Headquarters Marine Corps has made significant course corrections for improving the limited availability of infantry Sergeants. Some of the corrections involve the use of assignment incentive pays. One example is outlined in MARADMIN 097/08 Operating Force Extension Incentive. Under this program, Marines who extend their enlistment for 18 or 23 months of additional obligated service are eligible for \$15,000 (18 month extension) or \$20,000 (23 month extension) of assignment incentive pay. To be eligible for the Operating Force Extension Incentive, Marines must be either an infantry Corporal or a Sergeant and the extension must be coupled with assignment to an infantry or light armored reconnaissance battalion for the duration of the extension.<sup>30</sup> This program wisely narrows the assignment options so that a Marine who chooses to extend for the incentive will likely remain in the unit in which he has previously deployed, although this is not automatic. This program also specifically targets Corporals and Sergeants so that small unit leaders recognize that their knowledge, experience, and leadership are invaluable to the Marine Corps.

A second example is the meritorious promotion program for deploying infantry squad leaders outlined in MARADMIN 584/08. This program allows a battalion commander to nominate Corporals filling squad leader billets for meritorious promotion to Sergeant. The battalion commander can nominate the difference between the number of deployable Sergeants on his rolls and the number required by his unit table of organization. Division commanders are the approving authority for these meritorious promotions. For example, an infantry battalion has

a table of organization of 27 0311 Sergeant Rifle Squad Leaders. If the battalion has only 20 deployable 0311 Sergeants on its rolls after Headquarters Marine Corps has completing unit staffing, the battalion commander can nominate seven Corporals who are acting as Squad Leaders for meritorious promotion to Sergeant.<sup>31</sup>

### **Two Proposed Remedies**

Special duty assignments contribute immeasurably to the making of Marines and Headquarters Marine Corps annual retention goals. Despite the deployment tempo of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, special duty assignments remain 36 month tours. An adjustment in the tour length of special duty assignments would provide a Marine an opportunity to receive career enhancement and experience outside his primary occupational specialty. This abbreviated tour would also provide a break from the deployment tempo for those Marines in the operating forces. The 24 month tour would also return Sergeants to the operating forces at approximately year of service six. Since the Sergeant will be in the promotion zone for Staff Sergeant at year of service eight, such a change would give the Sergeant the opportunity to lead Marines in his primary occupational specialty as a Sergeant and, potentially, as a Staff Sergeant.

In addition to shortening the special duty assignment tour length, Marine non-commissioned officers should be offered an opportunity to enhance their individual proficiency through a structured professional development program. This program would be part of a reenlistment incentive that offers a one year hiatus from the deployment tempo. During the hiatus, the Marine would attend infantry squad leader course and additional infantry specific training courses. The time between courses or before the conclusion of the one year break could be used for leave, college courses, or whatever the Marine desires. The infantry military occupational specialties do not require the completion of career skills progression courses for



promotion eligibility. A program that incorporates reenlistment, additional service as a small unit leader in the operating forces, and the opportunity for increased leadership skills and occupational proficiency has the potential to improve the quantity and quality of Sergeants available for the operating forces.

### **Conclusion**

The "three block war strategic corporal" envisioned by General Krulak is the reality of conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To meet the challenge "A Concept for Distributed Operations" has emerged. This has training and manpower issues. As improved communication equipment permits the battlefield geometry to evolve, infantry squad leaders will make very complex tactical decisions; integrate the entire range of lethal and non-lethal capabilities; serve as the "moral anchor" for more junior Marines in confusing, chaotic, and violent environments; and ensure that tactical actions support operational and strategic objectives.<sup>32</sup> The Marine Corps is adapting its manpower practices to meet the operating forces requirements for Sergeant 0311s. Problems with current Headquarters Marine Corps manpower practices can be resolved, but the available inventory of Marines to reassign may take several years to materialize. The steps Headquarters Marine have taken and other options are a good start to strengthen the infantry leadership core and ensure that the Marine Corps is better postured to meet the challenges to our Nation's security.

## Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*, 1989, February 28, 2008 from [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service\\_pubs/mcdp1.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/mcdp1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "A Concept for Distributed Operations," April 25, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Christian F. Wortman, "Operationalize Distributed Operations: Enlisted Manpower Requirement and Solutions" *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 2007, 82.

<sup>6</sup> GS-15 Hector Duenez, Head Enlisted Force Distribution (MMEA-1), interview with author, November 17, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis G. Lee and Aline O. Quester, "Distributed Operations: Manpower Policies for Developing Small Unit Leaders" Center for Naval Analysis Report CRM D0014965.A1 SR1 (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, September 2006), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Matt Walker, "Mattis: Success in Iraq now a test of wills", *North County Times*, August 22, 2006, [http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2006/08/22/news/top\\_stories/11\\_01\\_508\\_21\\_06.txt](http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2006/08/22/news/top_stories/11_01_508_21_06.txt) (accessed September 15, 2008)

<sup>9</sup> Lewis G. Lee and Aline O. Quester, "Distributed Operations: Manpower Policies for Developing Small Unit Leaders" Center for Naval Analysis Report CRM D0014965.A1 SR1 (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, September 2006), 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Report Of Headquarters, United States Marine Corps Ground Board 2007-01, [http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/pp&o/POG/Ground\\_Board\\_Reports/ground\\_board\\_1-07\\_report.htm](http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/pp&o/POG/Ground_Board_Reports/ground_board_1-07_report.htm)

<sup>11</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 23-28.

<sup>13</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 28.

<sup>14</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 48.

<sup>15</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 128

<sup>16</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 128.

<sup>17</sup> John Sayen, "Battalion: An Organizational Study of the United States Infantry" (working paper, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2001), 141-142.

<sup>18</sup> Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "Table of Organization 1013G, Rifle Company, Infantry Battalion, Infantry Regiment, Marine Division" March 3, 2007.

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- <sup>28</sup> Colonel Peter Ferraro, Branch Head MMEA, interview with author, November 17, 2008.
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- <sup>30</sup> Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "MARADMIN 097/08: Operating Force Extension Incentive" February 7, 2008.
- <sup>31</sup> Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "MARADMIN 584/08: Increased Meritorious Promotions for FY09 and Special Meritorious Promotion Authority for 03XX" October 28, 2008.
- <sup>32</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Christian F. Wortman, "Operationalize Distributed Operations: Enlisted Manpower Requirement and Solutions" *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 2007, 84.

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## Appendix A

### Definition of Terms

Assignment Incentive Pay – monetary compensation for unusual or challenging assignment circumstances.

B-Billet - Assignments not directly related to a Marine's primary occupational specialty. Examples are Drill Instructor, Recruiter, Marine Combat Instructor, Marksmanship Instructor.

"Excepted" – manned and staffed at 100 percent of chargeable T/O&E by grade and military occupational specialty.

Table of Organization and Equipment (T/O&E) - prescribes the organization, staffing, and equipment of Marine Corps units.

Manning – process that applies endstrength, not actual inventory, against table of organization requirements.

Meritorious Promotion Program – promotion program based entirely on the Marine's demonstrated capability to discharge the responsibilities and duties of the higher grade in a satisfactory manner.

Operating Forces – those Marine Corps units that are deployable.

"Priority" - manned and staffed at 95 percent of chargeable T/O&E

"Proportionate share" - manned and staffed at a fair share apportionment of T/O&E

Special Duty Assignment – is considered to have an unusual degree of responsibility when a heavy personal burden is placed on the member to ensure the successful accomplishment of assigned duties. Currently, special duty assignments include: Marine Security Guard, Marine Corps Security Force Guard, Recruiter, Drill Instructor, and Marine Combat Instructor.

Staffing – process that manages current inventory of Marines, builds plans for future inventory and assigns available inventory.

## Appendix B

### Acronyms

AEF – American Expeditionary Force

BAR – Browning Automatic Rifle

EPAD – Enlisted Personnel Availability Digest

MARADMIN – Marine Corps Administrative Message

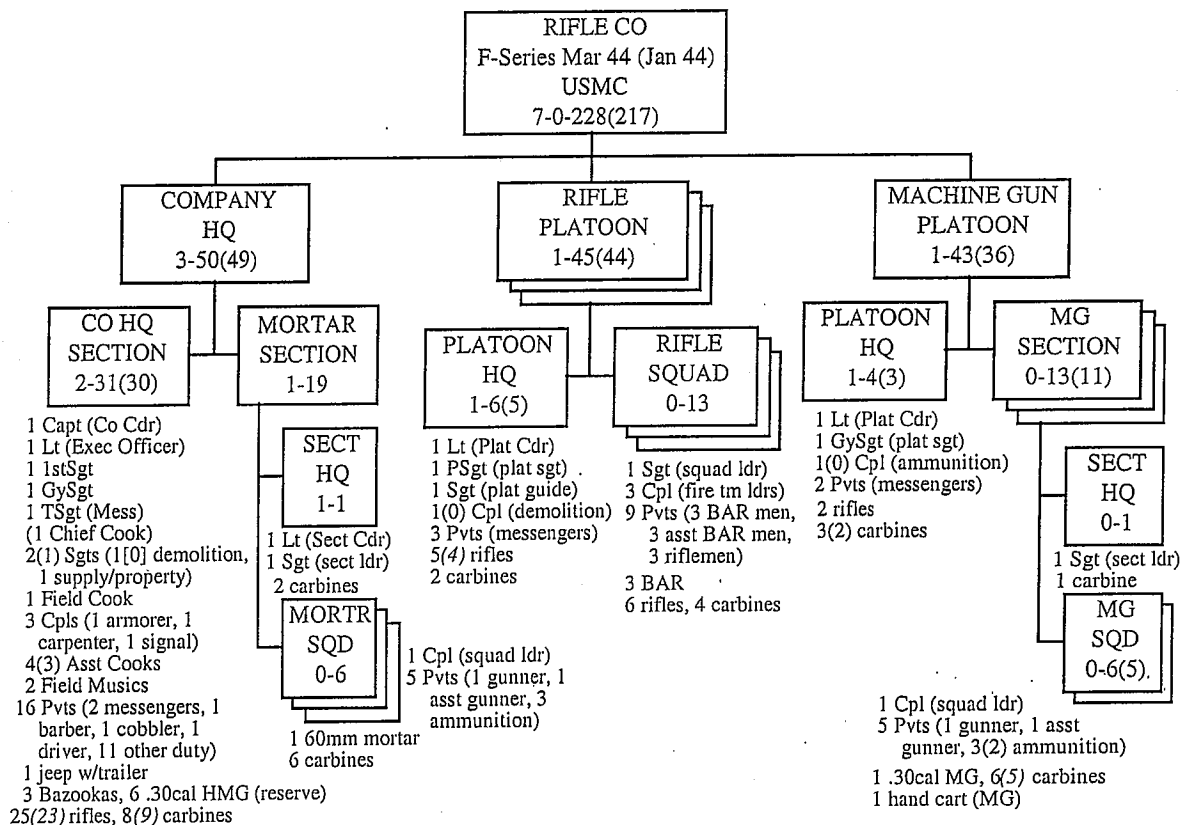
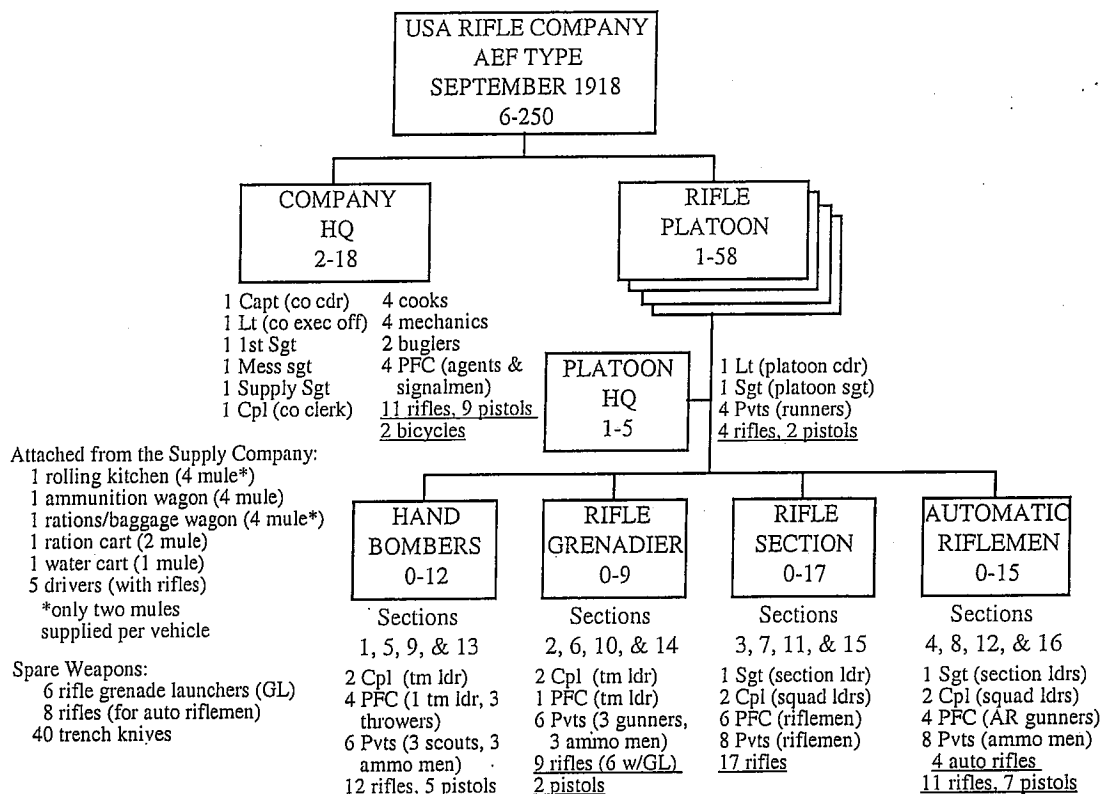
MARSOC – Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command

MOS – Military Occupational Specialty

T/O – Table of Organization

SDA – Special Duty Assignment

# Appendix C





# Appendix D

## Enlisted Personnel Availability Digest

For Official Use Only

Report Date: Fri-Jan-09-07-05-35-EST-2009

OCCFLD	'03
MOS	'0311
Description	Rifleman
ODSE Cycle	7-Jan-09
ASR Date	3-Oct-08
TFSMS Date	9-Jun-08

Requirements	E9	E8	E7	E6	E5	E4	E3	E2 E1	Total
fy09aa	0	0	0	0	2448	3482	8860	0	14790
FY09REQ	0	0	0	0	2389	3451	7416	3101	16357
FY10REQ	0	0	0	0	2388	3424	7413	3101	16326
FY11REQ	0	0	0	0	2313	3416	7446	3101	16276
fy12cc	0	0	0	0	2318	3414	9562	0	15294
fy13cc	0	0	0	0	2314	3410	9587	0	15311
ASR	0	0	0	0	1552	2714	4976	3101	12343
T2P2	0	0	0	0	136	163	918	0	1217
B Billet Gar Build	0	0	0	0	701	574	1522	0	2797
Inventory	E9	E8	E7	E6	E5	E4	E3	E2 E1	Total
Actual	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	83 (0)	2420 (0)	3488 (0)	9361 (0)	3532 (0)	18884 (0)
Actual as % of FY09REQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	101%	101%	126%	114%	115%
Chargeable	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	83 (0)	2408 (0)	3477 (0)	9297 (0)	2499 (0)	17764 (0)
Chargeable as % of FY09REQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	101%	101%	125%	81%	109%
Assignable	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	83 (0)	2395 (0)	3452 (0)	9256 (0)	2472 (0)	17658 (0)
Assignable as % of FY09REQ	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	100 (0)	100 (0)	125 (0)	80 (0)	108 (0)
MOS Not Equal to BMOS	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	49 (0)	749 (0)	582 (0)	1309 (0)	1379 (0)	4068 (0)
Selected for Next Grade	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0)	3 (0)	18 (0)
Transients	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	52 (0)	72 (0)	31 (0)	40 (0)	197 (0)

Numbers in parentheses are female Marines. All other numbers represent total male and female Marines.

The B Billet Gar Build is the number of billets built into the authorized strength report for 0311's. In this case, there are 701 billets for 0311 Sergeants.

# Appendix E

## Actual BBillets by MOS

For Official Use Only

Report Date: Fri-Jan-09-07-01-33-EST-2009

OCCFLD	'03
MOS	'0311
Description	Rifleman
ODSE Cycle	7-Jan-09
ASR Date	3-Oct-08
TFSMS Date	9-Jun-08

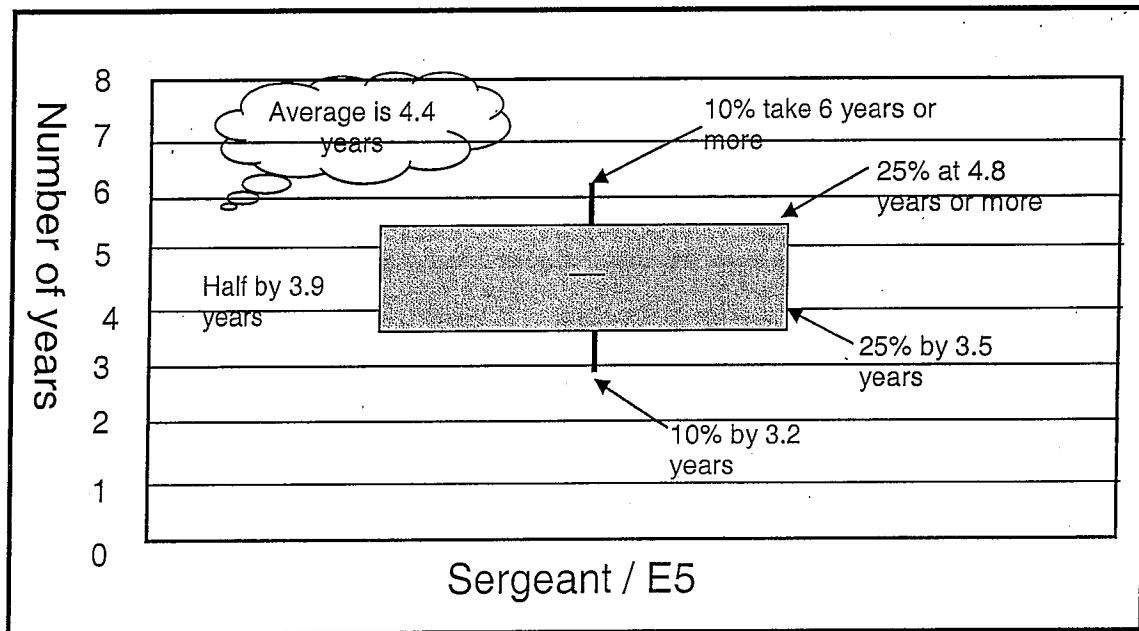
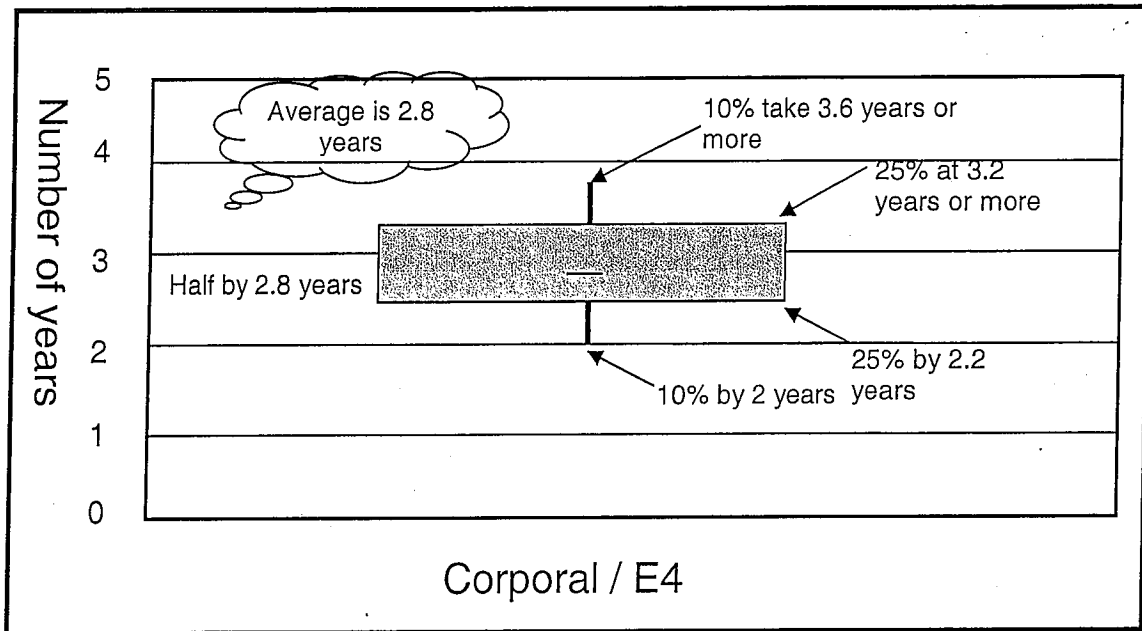
BMOS	E9	E8	E7	E6	E5	E4	E3	E2E1	TOTAL
	0	0	0	2	43	51	23	39	158
'0000	0	0	0	0	11	16	29	840	896
'0121	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
'0151	0	0	0	0	6	5	1	0	12
'0193	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'0200	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'0211	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
'0231	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
'0313	0	0	0	0	1	1	61	34	97
'0316	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
'0317	0	0	0	0	13	16	11	0	40
'0321	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	5
'0331	0	0	0	0	3	9	6	8	26
'0341	0	0	0	0	1	3	14	5	23
'0351	0	0	0	1	2	3	12	2	20
'0352	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	6
'0369	0	0	0	1	7	3	0	0	11
'0431	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
'0844	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
'0911	0	0	0	7	31	0	0	0	38
'0913	0	0	0	18	167	6	0	0	191
'0916	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	5
'0917	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
'0931	0	0	0	1	42	9	2	0	54
'0932	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
'0933	0	0	0	0	51	36	8	0	95
'1371	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
'2111	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'2311	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
'2847	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'3043	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
'3381	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
'3521	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'3531	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

# Appendix E

'3533	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'4133	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
'5811	0	0	0	0	1	9	8	0	18
'6072	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
'6253	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
'7041	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
'7314	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
'8013	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	1	7
'8014	0	0	0	1	55	71	53	16	196
'8028	0	0	0	2	18	1	0	0	21
'8151	0	0	0	0	11	8	2	0	21
'8152	0	0	0	1	67	267	1040	422	1797
'8154	0	0	0	0	5	24	4	2	35
'8156	0	0	0	3	37	7	1	0	48
'8411	0	0	0	10	110	2	0	0	122
'8511	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
'8541	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
'8621	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5
'8711	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	0	9
'8911	0	0	0	0	14	8	19	8	49
'9900	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
'9916	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
'MSO2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
'MSO3	0	0	0	1	8	2	0	0	11
'Total	0	0	0	49	749	582	1309	1379	4068

Appendix E shows that the total B billet build for 0311s is 2,797. Actual assignment shows that over 4,068 0311s are assigned to B billets.

# Appendix F





# Current 03XX Career Pattern

